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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ELA MONZ, EUR/ERA GIAUQUE, EUR/NB

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EU](#) [SY](#) [DA](#)

SUBJECT: DENMARK EXPECTS DELAY ON EU-SYRIA AGREEMENT

REF: STATE 1985

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Bill Mozdzierz, reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) In response to reftel demarche, Danish MFA Head of Department for the Middle East Tomas Anker Christensen indicated that Denmark does not expect that the EU foreign ministers will sign the EU-Syria Association Agreement for many months, and certainly not until the dust settles in Gaza and the Middle East landscape becomes a bit clearer. Christensen and his staff reported that others in the EU, including the Czech presidency, feel this way as well, and suggested that the issue would not be on the GAERC agenda until April or May at the earliest.

¶2. (C) Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller remains convinced that Syria must be "part of the solution," Christensen said, noting that the Danes welcome media reports that the incoming Obama Administration intends to take a comprehensive approach to Middle East peace efforts. We need to engage the Syrians, Christensen argued, and convince Damascus that its best future lies with the West, and not Iran. Christensen reported that human rights groups in Syria support early action on the EU Association Agreement because many of them believe that it can serve as a mechanism to restrain Syrian authorities on civil liberties.

¶3. (C) Having said that, Christensen maintained that FM Moller is clear-eyed about Syrian behavior and intentions, and is "in no rush" to sign the agreement. Syria first needs to demonstrate progress in the areas outlined in our demarche, Christensen said, especially in terms of reining in Hamas or otherwise contributing to peace efforts. Christensen argued that EU and the new U.S. administration should consult closely in the months ahead to make the best use of our available carrots and sticks and avoid allowing actors such as Syria to play us off each other. For his part, Christensen offered to travel to Washington for bilateral discussions on any aspect of Middle East policy, at any time.

CAIN